

Was the moon blue?

December started out as a dark month for much of Groton, as several incidents combined to create a rare series of electrical problems. While we at GELD do all we can to minimize outages, we appreciate your patience during these types of unpredictable, once-in-a-blue-moon events.

The problems began on the first. Blustery nights often cause problems and this was no different. High winds toppled a tree on Common Street, taking down two of our utility poles and putting those customers out of service for 2 hours. The other 1,400 or so customers on the main circuit feeding Common Street experienced only a momentary outage*.

Just a few hours later, National Grid experienced difficulties with one of the two transmission lines that feed our substation. When the line tripped, we experienced a 5-10 second brownout, or low voltage condition, as the electric load that is normally shared by two GELD transformers switched to just one. Around 3 p.m. the next day, National Grid put the line back in service, only to take it out again around 5 p.m.

Now, this is where the odds really went against us. Around 2:30 a.m., a small red squirrel was snooping at our substation and caused a fault. The resulting damage took out two circuits, cutting power to nearly two-thirds of Groton – about 3,000 customers. If our system had been operating normally with both transmission lines, only one circuit would have been affected.

Although squirrels are one of the most common causes of outages for Groton as a whole, substation outages caused by squirrels are relatively rare. When you couple that with losing one of our transmission lines twice in two days, look up – the moon may be blue.

**Our electrical equipment is coordinated to confine outages to as small a section as practical. It is also designed to differentiate between temporary faults – a branch brushing against a wire, for example, and a permanent fault. Most people would agree that a momentary outage is preferable to a longer period without power, even if it means a lot of clock resetting!*

Space heaters

Friend or foe?

If that frigid weather outside gets under your skin, there is nothing like a little warmth to take the chill off.

Electric space heaters can be a great way to thaw out toes and supplement your heating system during chilly weather. They are inexpensive and, if used carefully, can actually save energy.



GELD AT WORK
 Our linemen installing one of the new riser poles where the underground service from the Route 119 widening project will join with the current overhead lines.

While electricity is not the least expensive form of heating, it can be an economical solution if you use it to warm small areas instead of turning up the thermostat. Just remember that it will show up on your electric bill. The average cost to run a 1500-watt space heater for four hours is 62.6¢ if you take advantage of our early pay discount.

Be sure to read and follow all the safety rules that come with your space heater before you use it, and never leave it running unattended.

Is your meter clear?

Please remember our Meter Readers at this time of the year. They must physically get from your driveway to your electric meter. As the snow piles up, make sure there is a clear path to your meter. Remember, if you can't get to your meter, neither can we.

CELEBRATION TREE

Be sure to see this special tree

Groton Electric Light Department is proud to sponsor the Celebration Tree on Sawyer Common that will shine each evening through 2005 as part of the town's 350th anniversary celebration. The tree's special meaning adds to its beauty.

The Celebration Tree on Sawyer Common was lit on November 27, 2004 to kick off the year long celebration of Groton's 350th year as a town. If you have not yet seen the tree, it is worth driving to the corner of Martins Pond Road and Hollis Street. Its red, white and blue lights will shine for 350 minutes each evening through December 31, 2005.

Pilot meter program underway

A pilot program to test automated meter reading began in October, when GELD installed five electric meters in the center of Groton. Since then, we have added cells of five automated meters in three additional areas around town. The new meters can communicate with each other and transmit data to our main office via general packet radio service (GPRS) and the Internet.

We are testing the performance of automated meter reading in varied terrain and different population densities, and will evaluate the results through the winter. We are also evaluating the costs and benefits of different available systems. If all goes well, we hope to install an automatic meter reading system throughout Groton.



Truck Foreman Jay Willetts, seen above, and Apprentice Lineman Dave Goodall each spent 30 hours putting 22,694 lights on the Celebration Tree.

The tree's 22,694 individual lights each have a special meaning. The white lights symbolize each citizen of Groton. The red lights symbolize each year Groton has been a Town. The blue lights symbolize every citizen of Groton who has served Groton or the United States through community service.

Just two of the many public servants honored at the tree lighting were Ed Kopec and Harlan Fitch, both lifelong residents of Groton. Ed Kopec has served in the U.S. Air Force for 30 years and on the Groton Fire Department for 30 years. He has also served on the Town Government Study, the Finance Committee, and the Board of Assessors.

Harlan Fitch has served Groton his entire life. He has served as a charter member of the Groton Planning Board, Assessor, Keeper of the Town Clock, a member of the Town Forest Committee, a member of the Groton Sewer Commission, Precinct Warden for Town Elections, and as a member of the Groton Grange. He was appointed Measurer of Wood and Bark and the Surveyor of Wood and Lumber. He has never missed a Town Meeting.



The Celebration Tree shines with 12,000 blue lights symbolizing the citizens of Groton who have given service to their town or country.

Think of these gentlemen and everybody who serves our town and country when you see the blue lights at Sawyer Common over the next year. We at GELD are proud to be part of the Groton community and its celebration.